



Work-Based Learning Opportunities

Employer Overview

What is work-based learning?

Work-based learning is a competency-based experience that integrates classroom instruction with structured worksite experiences. Through work-based learning students gain occupational and employability skills while applying and advancing their knowledge in academic areas.

Work-based learning uses the school and workplace as resources for students

- To learn about careers
- Reflect on their interests
- Set career goals
- Develop the skills and knowledge needed for a productive future

It provides students with an opportunity

- To interact with adult workers
- Observe and ask questions about careers
- Do hands-on activities
- Reflect on the skills and knowledge needed to lead fulfilling lives

What are examples of work-based learning?

Each of the many types of work-based learning experiences requires different degrees of time, planning, and commitment. The more intense the experience, the longer students spend at the worksite, and that means more involvement by the employers and teachers/program coordinators in mentoring and supervising students. It also means the greater the opportunity for students to assume responsibility for their own learning. The following chart represents types of work-based learning experiences and time estimates for students to complete each activity.

Types of Work-Based Learning				
Field Trip	Job Shadow	Career Exploration	Internship	Extensive Work-Based Learning
1-3 hour tour of a workplace	3-6 hour experience during which students observe employees	10-30 hour experience during which students spend time one-on-one with workers and do hands-on activities	3-18 week experience during which students develop broad skills through hands-on learning and instruction, culminating in a product or presentation	3-12 month experience during which students gain specific technical skills, college credits, and/or certification through hands-on learning closely integrated with school-based activities

How can employers get involved in work-based learning?

Employers can get involved in work-based learning in many ways. Some employers begin with an experience that requires a minimum of time and effort, while others prefer to begin by working closely with partners in designing a long term, fully integrated program. There is no one right way to become involved; however, work-based learning not only benefits the student, but also has significant rewards for the employer.

When an employer is interested in becoming involved with work-based learning, the teacher/program coordinator and a school administrator such as the guidance counselor can meet with company representatives to determine the appropriate type of work-based learning experience and to develop a learning plan. Local union representatives may also participate in planning the activity, as well as students and their parent/guardian. The most successful work-based learning experience is one where everyone has had an opportunity to communicate his/her needs and interests and to be a part of developing the plan.

What are the benefits for employers?

When considering whether to get involved in work-based learning, consider the following list of employer benefits.

- Qualified entry-level workers—Working with students can expand the pool of job applicants and reduce training costs
- Productive work—While some work-based learning activities focus on career awareness only, others provide opportunities for students to do hands-on learning. A contribution of productive work does not violate child labor laws if
 - 1) the work-based learning is a planned program of sequenced activities that promote the mastery of basic and employment skills
 - 2) the benefits to the workplace are offset by the burden of instruction and supervision
 - 3) it does not displace any regular employee
 - 4) no wage is paid, and
 - 5) there is no promise of employment upon completion of the work-based learning activity.

Note: Seek legal advice or consult federal and state wage and hour offices regarding all child labor issues.

- Positive public image—If a business depends on the loyalty of customers in the community, playing a visible role in a partnership with schools and students helps create a positive public image. Good community relations make smart business sense.
- Fulfillment of civic responsibility—Employers in the non-profit sector often have as part of their charter an obligation to serve the community. Forming a partnership with schools can help meet this civic responsibility.
- Increased company morale—Employees often feel pride in sharing their expertise with students and find new excitement for their jobs when they are around young people who are interested in what they do and who want to learn from them.

- Tax credits—In some states employers receive tax credits for providing workplace learning opportunities for students. Check with your state employment and education agencies for more information.
- Investment in the future—Connecting students with the workplace gives them a clearer sense of the demands, opportunities, and responsibilities associated with being productive citizens. The stronger foundation they have, the better off everyone will be in the long run.
- Personal satisfaction—Becoming involved with students can be rewarding to both the employee and student. For the employee it is exciting to help a young person discover and learn about the world of work. For the student, it can increase their sense of connection to the community and increase their interest in school because they see why academic courses (skills) are needed to be successful in their career choice.

What are the liability issues with work-based learning?

Because students must be insured at school and work, insurance and liability issues arise any time students leave school premises to continue learning at the workplace; employers should seek legal advice to protect themselves from risks and liabilities. However, some general guidelines have been provided below to help both employers and teachers/program coordinators better understand relevant insurance and liability issues.

Liability issues generally fall into four categories:

1. Injury occurring to the student while at the workplace
 - Students involved in **paid work-based learning experiences** should be covered under the employer's workers' compensation insurance. This coverage affords the employer the same protection for students in paid positions as it does for full-time, regular employees.
 - Students in **unpaid experiences** cannot be covered by the employer's workers' compensation plan; however, because students' learning activities off school premises generally are considered to be an extension of school, they are usually protected by the school district's liability policies.
 - As more students take advantage of unpaid learning opportunities in the community, employers and school administrators may want to work together to cover students through special insurance policies and riders. For example, a school district can amend its workers' compensation insurance, or an employer can acquire a general liability policy.
2. Injury occurring to the student while in transit to or from the workplace—In general, liability for injuries or accidents during transit rests with the party responsible for transportation.

For example:

- A student is responsible if he or she drives a personally owned car
- The district is responsible if students travel by public transportation
- The employer is responsible if students are transported in a company-owned vehicle.

However, there are variations in different districts and states; therefore, it is necessary for schools to work with the employer to determine the standards that apply locally.

3. Injury to patrons or employees of the workplace—There is always the possibility that students may cause injury to customers or employees of the business. By extending its liability policy, a school district can usually provide coverage in the event a student injures someone at the workplace. Employer liability can occur if the employer has sole responsibility for training and/or supervising students.
4. Damage to the employer's property—The employer's property insurance may provide coverage in the event of accidental or intentional acts by students, but there will likely be a deductible, payment of which will need to be negotiated between the employer and the school district. Two possible solutions include:
 - Have the student named on the school district's policy if it provides property damage coverage
 - Have the employer waive subrogation rights against the district, school, and students.

To avoid misunderstanding in the event of accident or injury, the employer and school contact should discuss all relevant insurance and liability issues before students enter the workplace. The school district and employer, after consulting their insurance agents, should sign a written agreement specifying the terms, such as insurance requirements, hold harmless statements, responsibility for supervision, and subrogation rights, of the liability and coverage for students.